UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
38th meeting
held on
Thursday, 12 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/47/SR.38
27 November 1992
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

92-57728 6332S (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 87: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

Draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique (A/C.2/47/L.26)

1. Mr. MBENNA (United Republic of Tanzania), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.26 on behalf of the original sponsors, and Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali and Nepal, said that the text took into account the recently signed General Peace Agreement for Mozambique which had come into force on 15 October. The end of hostilities in Mozambique presented new challenges for the people and Government of Mozambique, and support would be needed for the electoral process, for emergency and rehabilitation assistance for refugees and displaced persons, and for programmes of demobilization of the armed forces. He drew particular attention to paragraph 7 of the draft resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution on the triennial comprehensive policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations system (A/C.2/47/L.22)

2. Mr. MALONE (United Kingdom), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.22 on behalf of the sponsors and Austria, said that Finland had inadvertently been listed as a sponsor and should be deleted from the list. He drew particular attention to paragraph 4 regarding the need for an overhaul of the resident coordinator system.

AGENDA ITEM 81: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/47/82-S/23512, A/47/88-S/23563, A/47/225, A/47/312-S/24238, A/47/391, 437, 441, A/47/449-S/24566, A/47/499, 530, and 564; E/1992/47)

3. Mr. KHAN (Chief, Inter-organizational Cooperation, Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD)), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the item (E/1992/47), said that despite a steady improvement in living conditions in many parts of the world, the phenomenon of poverty had not receded significantly. While the proportion of the poor had decreased, absolute numbers had not declined, and in many parts of Africa and Latin America, the incidence of poverty had actually increased. Almost a quarter of the world's population, mainly women and children, lived in unacceptable conditions of deprivation.

4. Poverty eradication was a priority objective of the International Development Strategy for the 1990s and of the World Bank, and had recently been recognized as essential to sustainable development. Considerable efforts

(Mr. Khan)

had been made by the United Nations and its development institutions to develop common approaches and strategies for the eradication of poverty. In 1990, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had convened an inter-agency seminar to discuss how poverty eradication goals could be integrated into structural adjustment programmes. Poverty eradication had also been discussed extensively at the latest session of the Economic and Social Council. Summing up the discussions, the President had suggested that there was wide support for the development of a common approach consisting of operational guidelines for the organizations of the United Nations system, the development of common country-specific anti-poverty strategies and closer collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system for integrating poverty alleviation goals into structural adjustment programmes.

5. Mr. MASOOD (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that it had been estimated that there were currently 1.2 billion poor people in the developing countries; unless adequate measures were adopted, more than half the population of Africa would be below the poverty line by the end of the decade. Seventy-seven per cent of the world's population earned no more than 15 per cent of its income, and the average per capita GNP was $12,510 in the North and $710 in the South, a ratio of 18:1. In the past decade, there had been further deterioration of the external economic environment, leading to increased pressures on the most vulnerable segments of the population of the developing countries. Those countries had engaged in structural adjustment programmes at great social and political costs, including, in particular, a marked decrease in calorie intake by the poorer segments of society, which adversely affected health.

6. Although the entire United Nations system seemed to be engaged in activities relating to poverty eradication - one of the highest priorities of the International Development Strategy for the 1990s - their effectiveness had been blunted by the uncoordinated manner in which they were being undertaken. The international community had yet to develop a system that would respond equitably to the increasing interdependence of the world economy. The existing pattern of integration on unequal terms continued to worsen, thus threatening the prospects for peace and security. The Group of 77 pledged to pursue economic growth with a human face and to promote a partnership for global development based on equality and equity.

7. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that while the issue of poverty eradication was indeed urgent, the prospects were not all gloomy. It would take an increase of only 10 per cent in the average income of the poor to bring them above the poverty line; that was not an inordinate price to rid the world of extreme poverty. There was a growing consensus on the practical measures needed to tackle global poverty. Economic growth would alleviate poverty only if it was broad-based. There was a need to invest in the human development of the poor, particularly in their education, health care and training; that would be of particular benefit to women and children, who

(Mr. Barnett, United Kingdom)

suffered disproportionately from the impact of poverty. Three quarters of the poor in developing countries lived in ecologically fragile areas. Poverty was closely interlinked with population growth and environmental degradation. Government policies must be designed having in mind the impact they would have on the poor and especially the most vulnerable of the poor. Meaningful participation in the political process for the poorest members of society was an essential precondition for genuine, sustainable development. Many countries did not devote adequate resources to poverty alleviation, and much could be done by reallocating existing resources.

8. Excessive military spending should be curtailed and sound macroeconomic policies adopted to promote job creation by creating a supportive climate for small- and medium-sized businesses. There should be efficient and realistic fiscal and monetary assistance. Resources should not be squandered on inefficient or prestigious public investment, but rather be redirected to education and health care, especially at the primary level. Poor people, and in particular, poor households headed by women, were often excluded from such programmes.

9. The industrialized countries could promote economic growth by encouraging favourable external economic conditions, including open trading systems, debt-relief measures and concessional aid which took note of national priorities. At the Rio Conference the European Community and its member States had announced an initial commitment of 3 billion European Currency Units further to strengthen their assistance to developing countries in the field of sustainable development and to increase their funding for Agenda 21. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the recommendations made by the President of the Economic and Social Council in his concluding statement at the Council's last session. The European Community and its member States wished to ensure that those recommendations were followed up. The developing countries must define national priorities, implement them effectively and take the lead role in coordinating United Nations assistance for poverty alleviation. The industrialized countries must provide appropriate, better targeted assistance to developing countries, in particular to enhance their institutional capacity for policy formulation and the coordination of programme implementation.

10. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the new UNCTAD Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation would have an important role to play in promoting poverty eradication as an essential part of development assistance. A consistent, well-considered approach to poverty alleviation should be developed under the leadership of resident coordinators on the basis of national priorities and with focus on key areas. An integrated approach to poverty alleviation in the field needed to be backed up by more effective coordination at Headquarters. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) would have a particular contribution to make in that respect.

(Mr. Barnett, United Kingdom)

11. Finally, he welcomed the attention being given by institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP to improving statistics on poverty, particularly with respect to women and children. United Nations analytical capacity needed to be more closely linked with country-level operations and capacity.

12. Mr. ROJAS (Mexico) said that the issue of poverty had become one of vital importance to the international community, as societies increasingly turned their attention to the quality of life of the individual. The United Nations should take the lead in the fight against poverty.

13. In Mexico major changes had been made which reflected the situation of the present times. There were economic and political changes, but the most significant one was the re-establishment of the relationship of the individual with political institutions and with the environment. Opportunities were opening up for all Mexicans. After years of stagnation, the economy was growing faster than the population. There was a new definition of the economic relationship of Mexico to the rest of the world, and the changed economic role of the State had given Mexico sound public finances, a smaller external and domestic debt and stronger management of the economy.

14. The most important aspect of the economic change was the State's new conception of, and emphasis on, social policies. Under the National Solidarity Programme, investments had grown from $933 million in 1989 to $3,585 million in the present year. In 1992, government expenditure relating to that programme, and to education, health, food, the environment and basic services accounted for 50 per cent of total public expenditure.

15. Every day, thousands of Mexicans were added to the programme of health care coverage. Schools were being built or rehabilitated, and electricity, drinking water and drainage were being brought to Mexicans who had not previously enjoyed such amenities, for although providing services would not, in itself, overcome poverty, eliminating inadequacies in services would establish an environment conducive to productive work. The measures to eradicate poverty were carried out in a context of care for the environment, although not one of conservation as such. The aim was to seek a fair balance between the needs of the environment and the needs of the people inhabiting it.

16. The Solidarity Programme was based on four simple principles: respect for the will, initiatives and organizational structures of individuals and communities; full and effective community participation and organization; shared responsibility; transparency, honesty and efficiency in management of resources. On that basis, the historical experience of community participation was being revived. Each community established a Solidarity committee to direct activities: organizing, directing and implementing projects as a community undertaking rather than leaving everything to the Government. In four years, more than 100,000 committees had been established, showing that Solidarity was truly a policy involving all members of society.

(Mr. Rojas, Mexico)

17. Another element in overcoming poverty in the developing countries involved rethinking economic relations between countries. With the active participation of UNDP and other international organizations such as the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, Mexico was organizing meetings with various Latin American and other countries for the purpose of exchanging experience.

18. It would be desirable to establish an information network covering the programmes being carried out by the United Nations system and by Governments in the fight against poverty. Overcoming poverty was not simply a matter of charity nor of moral commitment, but a question of survival. Democracy, freedom and peace could not flourish in poverty, nor could the environment be preserved at the expense of the quality of life of millions of people.

19. Mrs. KHANAM (Bangladesh) said that while on the political front there was hope of a new world order where peace would prevail everywhere, insufficient attention was being given to addressing the root causes of poverty. Poverty not only could destroy peace and stability but was a prime cause of environmental degradation in the developing countries.

20. Limited resources, high population growth, limited export markets, overdependence on agriculture and other factors had all contributed to the growth of poverty in the developing countries. Bangladesh had adopted far-reaching measures to combat the problem. Steps had been taken to increase domestic saving and encourage investment in productive sectors. Incentives were provided for investment in remote and underdeveloped areas. The utmost importance had been assigned to population control, and the country's population growth rate had dropped to 2.16 per cent. As natural disasters such as cyclones and floods also contributed to poverty, the Government of Bangladesh had drawn up appropriate plans and hoped for significant international cooperation in that area. Food production had almost doubled since the early 1970s, per capita calorie availability had risen dramatically and access to food for the disadvantaged had greatly improved. Efforts had also been made to promote labour-intensive small industries in rural areas, notably for marginal farmers, the landless and also destitute women.

21. Poverty eradication was a key objective of the fourth Five-Year Plan. There was a need for institutional restructuring and decentralized participatory planning to bring the poor and disadvantaged from the periphery to the hub of the development programmes. Sound fiscal and monetary policies were being followed in an attempt to restore macroeconomic stability.

22. Mr. HADDAD (World Bank), stressing that sustainable poverty reduction had always been the over-arching objective of the World Bank, recalled how the Bank's strategy for achieving that end had shifted over the years from one that focused mainly on economic growth to one that consisted of two equally important and mutually reinforcing elements, namely, broadly based economic growth and systematic investment in the development of human resources.

(Mr. Haddad, World Bank)

23. Recently, the recognition that without environmental protection, lasting development was impossible had led to the addition of a third facet, namely environmental protection, to the Bank's poverty reduction strategy. The next step had been to integrate the three-part strategy into Bank operations. In 1991, the Bank had published a policy paper entitled "Assistance Strategies to Reduce Poverty", demonstrating how assistance strategies could be grounded more firmly in a country-specific analysis of poverty, and proposing measures to accelerate widespread adoption of the currently best available practice. In 1992, the Bank had published two volumes aimed at practical implementation, the "Poverty Reduction Handbook" and the "Operational Directive on Poverty Reduction".

24. Twenty country poverty assessments had been completed since 1989, helping to strengthen dialogue and develop lending programmes in support of government efforts to reduce poverty. In terms of Bank lending targeted specifically at poverty reduction, the total was about $3 billion, or about 12 to 15 per cent of total World Bank lending, including projects designed to improve the productivity of small farmers; to provide basic health care, nutrition services, water and sanitation; and to provide basic infrastructure in regions of concentrated poverty.

25. In the long term, the progress of the developing countries in reducing poverty would depend primarily on their own domestic resources and their income from foreign trade. In the short term, however, where those countries demonstrated a real commitment to reducing poverty the external resources needed to support the commitment must be made available by the international community.

26. Mr. BARRERO (Colombia) said that the end of the cold war had not brought the international community any closer to establishing mechanisms to ease the lives of the hundreds of millions of the world's poor. The so-called "new world order", which was based primarily on the avoidance of confrontation, did not place sufficient emphasis on solving the problem of increasing poverty in the developing world. Paradoxical as it might seem, unless the international community took the necessary measures to alleviate and eradicate poverty, it might turn out that the end of the cold war had adversely affected a large part of the world's population.

27. While some social indicators, such as life expectancy and elementary education, had improved in recent decades, the number of the world's poor had continued to increase. It was currently estimated that 1.4 million persons lived in poverty, and that number was not expected to decline before the end of the century.

28. The process of democratization and the broadening of political and social freedoms that was spreading throughout the world would be viable only if the international community succeeded in improving the living conditions of the poorest segments of society. Social and economic objectives should not only

(Mr. Barrero, Colombia)

be compatible, they should also reinforce each other. Economic programmes that encouraged openness and privatization and, in general, the trend towards a market-oriented economy could have devastating social repercussions unless Governments, both individually and jointly, developed clear and resolute policies to cushion the impact of such policies on the most vulnerable groups of the population.

29. While the number of poor people was increasing in the developed countries, poverty was much more prevalent in the developing countries; the latter should therefore receive assistance on a priority basis. In the developed countries, privatization and expenditure on armaments continued to divert attention from social problems. As a result, even the industrialized countries were faced with a deteriorating social situation, which made them less inclined to participate in programmes to combat poverty in the developing countries.

30. Unless the international economic environment was conducive to growth it would be difficult for the developing countries to obtain funds to finance their social development programmes. Without an open and fair international trading system, the prices and volume of their exports would continue to decline, which would have an adverse effect on the implementation of social policies.

31. The scarce resources that were currently allocated for international assistance to the developing countries could be markedly increased if the industrialized countries removed their protectionist trade barriers. The gospel of the free market, preached as dogma to the developing countries, was of even greater relevance to the developed world. The double standard practised by those who advocated economic openness as the panacea for the developing countries while remaining silent about the industrialized countries' protectionist restrictions, could not be tolerated. An open and transparent trade system required greater efforts in the area of cooperation and the solution of the most critical problems of the poorest countries.

32. Official development assistance (ODA) should be a relevant source of cooperation, as part of the resources for implementing human development policies. Unfortunately, ODA targets were far from being achieved. International bodies, in particular the agencies of the United Nations system, as well as the regional commissions and the financial institutions, should make greater efforts to combat poverty and improve the efficiency of coordinating mechanisms.

33. While the nature of poverty was well known, the international community lacked a strategy to combat it effectively. The Department of Economic and Social Development should demonstrate the wisdom of the recent reforms in the United Nations Secretariat by achieving effective results in that field; so far, such results had not been forthcoming.

34. Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia) said that, at its substantive session of 1992, the Economic and Social Council had emphasized the need for greater and more effective coordination in the United Nations system's efforts to combat poverty. The Council had singled out the most vulnerable groups, such as women and refugees, for special support and had stressed the need to mitigate the harsh social consequences of structural adjustment programmes. It had also underscored the importance of taking resolute measures to remove the social causes of poverty, which included illiteracy, poor health and the subordination of women.

35. His delegation supported the idea of modifying existing arrangements for system-wide coordination to encompass poverty issues in a more comprehensive manner. It also agreed that United Nations policies and activities in the field of poverty alleviation should be guided by internationally agreed strategies and objectives, such as those contained in Agenda 21 and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. At the country level, his delegation welcomed the focus on the responsibility of national Governments for defining national priorities and their assumption of a leading role in coordinating United Nations assistance for poverty alleviation.

36. Coordination would not bring about the desired objective of eradicating poverty unless greater emphasis was placed on accelerating broad-based, people-centred and sustainable development. Policy measures undertaken by the developing countries had tended to rely on a combination of sustained economic growth, income distribution, especially through public expenditure on social services, the channelling of basic needs programmes to the poor, and the activities of the poor themselves. However, most developing countries, even those that had received generous amounts of foreign aid, had not been able to accrue the resources necessary to reduce mass poverty significantly. While a number of countries had achieved some progress through sustained and rapid growth, they had become more polarized and their poverty levels had not been appreciably reduced, because of the unequal distribution of the benefits of such growth.

37. Human beings were at the centre of all development activities, and human resources were an essential means of achieving economic, social and development objectives. The reinforcement of human and social development should contribute to overall development by ensuring that all individuals developed their potential to the fullest. Only then would there be prosperity for all.

38. Mr. MA Zhaoxu (China) said that, as a result of their unremitting efforts over the years, a number of developing countries had achieved some success in alleviating poverty. The experiences of those countries, which included China, indicated that international cooperation for the eradication of poverty should give priority to three issues.

(Mr. Ma Zhaoxu, China)

39. First, it was necessary to revitalize the economic development and growth of the developing countries and poor regions. The key to eradicating poverty lay in tapping the economic potential of poor countries and regions and channelling it into development activities in order to build endogenous capacities for developing commodity-based economies. It was important that the poor countries themselves should formulate and implement their own poverty eradication strategies. Such strategies should include maximum and effective use of valuable human resources, greater financial and material assistance to poor regions and populations, improved infrastructure, better management of poverty eradication projects, transfer and disssemination of advanced technology and know-how, institution of a social security system, education, and human resources development. At the same time, efforts for poverty eradication should be combined with environmental protection.

40. Second, the eradication of poverty in the developing countries should be viewed as a common responsibility of all members of the international community. Progress in that area would contribute to the prosperity and stability of the developed countries, as well as the development of the developing countries themselves. The international community, in particular the developed donor countries, should therefore act quickly to fulfil their pledges to improve their assistance in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In particular, the World Bank and the International Development Association (IDA) should play their due role in that area. Since poverty was closely related to such issues as trade, external debt and environment, the developed donor countries should endeavour to create favourable conditions for developing countries by improving their terms of trade, reducing their debt burden and helping them protect their environment.

41. Finally, the United Nations should further strengthen its work in the area of poverty alleviation and eradication by increasing its efficiency and effectiveness in rendering assistance to developing countries and enhancing coordination among its various sectors and institutions. At the same time, all parts of the United Nations system should increase their cooperation and coordination with multilateral financial institutions in the field of poverty eradication and make maximum use of their comparative advantages.

42. Mr. SINGH (India) said that the first lesson that India had learned in its efforts to combat poverty was that there were no global solutions. Even at the national level, there was no strategy that could be applied to all regions and all vulnerable groups. Country-specific programmes and, within countries, programmes directed at target groups were the only ones that had any chance of succeeding.

43. India had placed great emphasis on projects and programmes that took the form of labour-intensive, employment-generating projects that simultaneously built up the social infrastructure; food-for-work programmes; and schemes that enhanced the scope and content of basic minimum needs programmes. In addition, India had endeavoured to focus on direct benefits to the poorest of

(Mr. Singh, India)

the poor. The success or failure of a programme was measured by the degree to which it had resulted in self-sufficient and self-sustaining productive employment. A successful poverty eradication programme was one that could exist and sustain itself after it ceased receiving external support.

44. International cooperation for poverty eradication should be based on national plans, programmes and priorities, and no attempt should be made to impose a global solution. The programming, planning and national execution of poverty eradication should be led by national Governments, and the efforts of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes should be incorporated into such national efforts.

45. In making such efforts, countries such as India had also made dramatic changes to integrate themselves more fully into the global economy. Such integration would enhance their ability to deal more effectively with mass poverty and social inequalities. Without long-term external support, national efforts would be greatly strained.

46. In the belief that economic growth was not in itself sufficient to overcome poverty, India had allocated considerable financial and human resources to poverty programmes. Those programmes would be greatly assisted by an increased transfer of concessional resources and by fulfilment of the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance.

47. Biotechnology had a crucial role in increasing the productivity of agriculture and the well-being of the poor. India therefore hoped that the technology-rich countries would respond to the provisions of resolution 46/141, calling for the transfer of technology on concessional and preferential terms to the developing countries. In addition, the lending agencies must make efforts to mitigate the impact of structural adjustment programmes on vulnerable groups, in particular through the provision of social safety nets.

48. Agenda 21 had stated that a specific anti-poverty strategy was a basic precondition for sustainable development. The cost of such a strategy was, however, considerable and the commitment of the international community to the eradication of poverty would, he hoped, be reflected in specific resource commitments.

49. With reference to the field coordination of United Nations activities in poverty eradication, he stressed that coordination should not be used as a pretext to restrict or modify the distinct mandates of each specialized agency and that coordination remained the responsibility of national Governments. India believed that the concepts of United Nations ambassadors and enhanced field-level representation were fraught with pitfalls and should be avoided.

50. Mr. CARMICHAEL (Canada) said that his delegation fully supported the call for a common, system-wide approach to policies and activities for poverty eradication, which should be at the centre of all United Nations development programming. All consultative groups and round tables concerned should examine the appropriateness of policy frameworks, the provision of equal opportunities and educational, financial and capital constraints.

51. In addition, Canada believed that the enhancement of economic and educational opportunities for women was crucial to poverty alleviation and it urged the United Nations development organizations, within their respective mandates, to emulate the exemplary work being done in that area by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

52. While consideration should be given to the comparative advantages of the different agencies in poverty-focused development programmes, a common approach must be fostered throughout the United Nations system, involving close cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the relevant specialized agencies. In addition, fuller use should be made of the expertise of non-governmental organizations and their participation and influence in poverty alleviation policies should be increased; where necessary, they should have access to United Nations resources to support their own programmes.

53. Finally, he stressed that, while the responsibility for creating a policy environment conducive to poverty alleviation rested with national Governments, the participation of all those concerned, including non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, private sector establishments and the general public, should be encouraged, as poverty alleviation programmes could only gain from broad popular participation.

54. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that his country's "transitional economy" strategy aimed to break the vicious cycle of poverty, by improving the productivity of the poorer sectors in developing countries. In that strategy, food aid was seen not merely as a stop-gap measure in times of emergency, but as a short-term strategy paid for in kind through participation in labour-intensive programmes.

55. The strategy concentrated on the rural sector, particularly in the poorest land-locked developing countries, where it aimed to promote growth through gradual, low-cost programmes in a limited number of areas, namely, agricultural productivity; off-farm rural job creation; rural social services and infrastructure; employment, housing and services in urban slums; and population control. Programmes in those areas endeavoured to synthesize national policies with regional needs while remaining sufficiently flexible to be modified as and when necessary.

56. Israel had used the strategy in attaining its own high-technology economy and self-sufficiency in agriculture and had applied elements of the strategy in numerous international programmes in the developing world. Israel had amassed considerable experience in rural development and agriculture under difficult conditions and was willing to place it at the disposal of other countries.

57. Mr. JOSHI (Nepal) said that, in the new world order, security should not be viewed purely in military terms but as a combination of social, political and economic factors capable of overcoming the dangers of poverty, environmental degradation, terrorism and drug trafficking. A world divided sharply between rich and poor could not be secure and stable. He therefore urged the United Nations system to place poverty eradication high on its agenda, and stressed that it was more vital than ever before to reactivate North-South dialogue on the basis of interdependence and mutuality of interests.

58. Nepal regretted the inadequate response given by industrial countries to the issues of growth and poverty, exemplified by the stalemate in the Uruguay Round and the disappointing level of ODA flows. By redirecting funds from military expenditure and agricultural subsidies, donor countries could significantly increase the resources available to poor countries.

59. He described a range of poverty alleviation initiatives, undertaken by regional bodies such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, placing primary education in the forefront of the struggle against poverty, and at the national level, by his Government, through a series of education, family planning and women's programmes. As both a least developed and land-locked country, Nepal faced massive challenges in all sectors and its efforts needed to be supplemented by an enhanced level of external assistance. Poverty degraded not only those who suffered from it but also those who tolerated it and he urged the United Nations to realize, at last, its goal of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

60. Mrs. OLSZOWSKI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that since sustainable development was contingent upon success in guaranteeing human development, equality, respect for the natural ecosystems and the strengthening of democratic processes, UNESCO was actively collaborating with member States in their efforts to reduce absolute poverty, particularly through the education sector.

61. UNESCO's actions in that area aimed to develop viable educational strategies, tailored to financial constraints and capable of surviving crises and far-reaching economic and social change; and to make a technical contribution, as a non-funding Member of the United Nations system, to the dialogue between Member States and funding sources. Corresponding projects had been commenced, primarily with UNDP financing, in various African and Asian countries. An inter-agency task force on austerity, adjustment and human resources had been established by UNESCO and ILO and other coordination initiatives on structural adjustment and social problems had been mounted by UNESCO and the specialized agencies and international organizations active in Latin America, with the participation of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Andean Pact.

(Mrs. Olszowski, UNESCO)

62. Information, education and communication programmes, such as those promoted through the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, adopted at Jomtien in March 1990, had an essential role to play in combating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Since both structural adjustment policies and social and population policies were currently being hampered by low educational levels in the populations concerned, allocations to education should not be reduced for any reason. In addition, the communication capacities of the developing countries must be strengthened in the fight against poverty and, to that end, UNESCO was collaborating with UNFPA in more than 100 population education and communication projects, as well as implementing university-based programmes to strengthen the capacities of the least developed countries and to close the gap in scientific and technological knowledge between developed and developing countries.

63. In the absence of a system-wide mechanism for the coordination of poverty alleviation activities, there was a great need to strengthen the mechanisms for inter-agency coordination in that area. In particular, UNESCO strongly believed that the proposed 1995 world summit for social development should serve to strengthen the Organization's role in combating poverty.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.